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SUBJECT: TURKEY REACTS POSITIVELY TO ERDOGAN-POTUS MEETING

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Reactions in Turkey to PM Erdogan's November 5 meeting with President Bush span the spectrum depending on the political and ideological views of the individual or media outlet offering comment. In public comments subsequent to his meeting with POTUS, Erdogan has made clear his appreciation for support at the highest levels of the USG for Turkey's struggle against PKK terrorism. He underscored the intent of his government to carry out whatever operations might be necessary to counter the PKK threat, emphasizing that their sole target was the PKK. GOT officials have emphasized that the POTUS-PM meeting demonstrated that Turkey and the United States share a "joint determination" to combat terrorism and noted that the two leaders discussed ways to further enhance political, diplomatic, and military cooperation in this struggle. President Gul commented that the United States has a responsibility to fight the PKK, adding that the diplomacy phase has given way to military-to-military cooperation between Turkey and the U.S. Meanwhile, most media outlets in Turkey speculate that President Bush has given Turkey a green light to carry out some form of military operation against PKK targets in northern Iraq. Only the nationalist fringe has argued otherwise, calling the POTUS-Erdogan meeting "a fiasco" and claiming that Erdogan returns to Ankara only with more empty promises of intelligence-sharing. END SUMMARY

ERDOGAN: RESOLUTE AND HAPPY; SOLE TARGET IS THE PKK

¶2. (U) PM Erdogan spoke at length about his meeting with President Bush, as well as his government's determination to counter the threat to Turkey's security posed by the PKK, in public remarks in Washington and Rome. He lamented the lack of international support Turkey has received in its fight against terrorism, saying, "There are European countries where the leaders of the PKK are caught...go through a judicial process, but are not kept in custody and thus are able to flee and return to Iraq. I find it very difficult...to understand this." Consequently, "Turkey quite naturally will exercise its own right to protect itself and

its people from terrorism, because states are responsible for protecting their territorial integrity and their citizens."

¶13. (U) Erdogan made clear Turkey has the power to defend itself and is prepared to take whatever action it deems necessary to counter the PKK threat. "Turkey has no patience left to deal with mechanisms which ... were tried but did not yield any results. Turkey expects from the United States and the central Iraqi government concrete and urgent steps which will put a final end to PKK terrorism emanating from northern Iraq...and we are on the point of using our rights emanating from international law." He emphasized that any action Turkey might take in northern Iraq would be solely focused on the PKK, saying "Our aim, our sole aim here, is the PKK terrorist organization based in northern Iraq, not civilians...we have, especially with northern Iraqis, relationships -- our people living in the southeastern part of Turkey have family ties with people living there." Erdogan also explained that any military action Turkey does take will be of a limited nature, stating, "We are not on the eve of a war. We have made a decision on an operation. I want to stress once again that what we will do is an operation."

¶14. (U) The PM noted that Turkey's goal is to dissolve PKK camps in northern Iraq, cut off logistical support to the organization, capture its leaders, prevent PKK involvement in legitimate politics in Iraq, and increase the flow of intelligence regarding PKK activities between Turkey and its U.S. and Iraqi allies. He underscored Turkey's preference to work toward these goals in cooperation with the U.S., saying "It is important to work jointly and in solidarity with our strategic partner, the United States, because they have declared the PKK as a terrorist organization, and it is

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important that we fight jointly against the leaders, the murderers of this organization. We place priority on intelligence sharing...(and) have also discussed the importance of real-time and on-time intelligence sharing." Asked if the President had asked Erdogan not to carry out a cross border operation into Iraq, Erdogan said, "No, they all said that we are right...as I leave your country, I see that we agree to a great extent. I am happy."

GUL: DIPLOMACY IS OVER

¶15. (U) En route to Azerbaijan for a state visit, President Gul told journalists traveling with him that all of Turkey's state institutions, including the government, the armed forces, all ministries, and other security forces, have come to a consensus on how Turkey should respond to the PKK's continued attacks. He said that the United States, as an ally of Turkey's, has the responsibility to help it fight against terrorism, and noted that, "in that fight the diplomacy phase is over and a military-to-military period between the U.S. and Turkey has begun." Like Erdogan, however, Gul emphasized Turkey's intention to focus military action solely on terrorists in northern Iraq, not on civilians or the Kurdish Regional Government.

¶16. (U) Other GOT officials followed a similar line. Deputy Chief of Defense Forces General Ergin Saygun, who accompanied Erdogan during his meeting with POTUS, stressed the importance of the determination demonstrated by U.S. officials to fight terrorism, adding that the intelligence mechanism to be set up between Turkey and the U.S. cannot be compared to coordination mechanisms established earlier.

MEDIA: MIXED

¶17. (U) Most Turkish media outlets and commentators reacted to reports that Erdogan and POTUS had agreed upon an enhanced intelligence cooperation mechanism as a sign that Washington

has given Turkey a "green light" to conduct military operations against the PKK inside northern Iraq. Murat Yetkin of liberal "Radikal" commented that the result of the POTUS-Erdogan meeting pleased both the (Turkish) military and the civilians. He quoted military sources saying the result of the meeting was as they expected. The fact that the PKK issue would be handled in military-to-military channels indicated that the government and TGS would have common responsibility for the outcome. "Radikal" also reported that U.S. spy planes will monitor PKK activities in northern Iraq and provide real-time data to Turkish forces to enable them to launch coordinated operations against the terrorist group. "Aksam" reported the U.S. will put its "Echelon" system into use, involving satellite reconnaissance of PKK movements as well as monitoring of PKK communications.

¶8. (U) Some opposition leaders agreed. Republican People's Party (CHP) chairman Deniz Baykal cited as important President Bush's reference to the PKK as an enemy of the U.S. and noted the President did not say Turkey should not carry out military operations. Former President Suleyman Demirel said the result of the meeting "should not be underestimated.

"It is a good result." Abdulhamit Bilici of the Islamist leaning "Zaman" commented, "The meeting at the White House indicates that Washington has taken the lead in the fight against the PKK by bypassing Baghdad and the northern Kurdish administration. President Bush did not want to give a direct answer regarding a CBO but emphasized the sharing of intelligence. Intelligence sharing is enough of an indication for support of a military operation. Instead of listening to what has been said in Turkish circles about the result of the White House meeting, let's listen to what (White House spokesperson) Dana Perino is saying: 'The U.S. will provide intelligence for Turkey's limited and targeted

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operations against the PKK.' If this cannot be called a green light for the operation, what is it then?"

¶9. (U) Turkey's nationalist fringe, which has attempted to use Erdogan and the ruling AKP's record on the terrorism issue to gain electoral support, was critical of the results of the meeting. Nationalist Action Party (MHP) Chairman Devlet Bahceli said the POTUS-Erdogan meeting was a "fiasco," and criticized the U.S. for not being willing to take concrete action against the PKK. MHP Vice Chairman Tunca Toskay said the meeting did not yield the expected result. Nationalist "Cumhuriyet" complained, "The meeting of Erdogan and Bush shows that the development will be controlled by Washington." "Milliyet" columnist Semih Idiz attempted to come down in the middle of the debate, noting that "the U.S. will not object to a limited Turkish military operation in northern Iraq...but has not given a green light to an extensive operation."

PKK WARNING

¶10. (U) Turkish media reported on November 8 that the PKK had sent a letter to U.S. officials in Iraq warning the U.S. to stop reconnaissance flights over the PKK-controlled Kandil Mountain region of northern Iraq, "and to avoid steps that would lead to instability in the region."

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